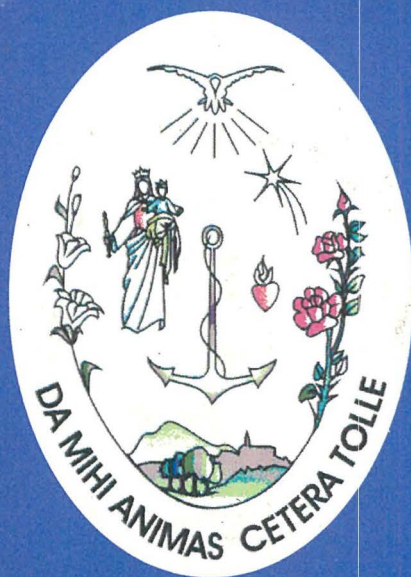


SALESIAN SISTERS OF DON BOSCO

Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

GOZO



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1963 – 2013

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First Published in September 2013



Prayer

God our Father, as we are gathered on this special day, we kneel before you in praise and gratitude for all that you have bestowed on all our families, through the work of saints and the generosity of many others, who continued in their footsteps in honour of your Word.

We present our thanksgiving through the intercession of our heavenly Mother and your beloved Son and Our Lord Jesus Christ, thus abiding by the specific wish of St John Bosco who wanted the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to be a *'living, monument of gratitude to Mary Help of Christians'*.

In offering all that which has been given by many throughout these 50 years, we thank you for all the graces we have received through the saintly work of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

We thank you for the vocational calling of all the sisters who gave and are still giving their dedicated service within the Salesian Sisters' Community in Gozo and Malta, for the benefit of us all.

We thank you for the wholehearted generosity of Miss Olimpia Bondi and her parents Arturo and Dola.

We thank you for our superiors amongst whom our Rev. Mother General, Sr Yvonne Reungoat, our Mother Provincial, Sr Marinella Scano and our Bishops, H.E. Mgr Charles J Scicluna and H.L. Mgr, Mario Grech all witnesses of our gratitude on this very special day.

We pray that they may have the necessary spiritual and physical strength, so that they may continue to be of added guidance to those you have left in their care.

Bless all of us who have been blessed by your providence through this mission and bless all the Salesian congregation around the world. May it continue to be a living sign of your Love and that of our heavenly Mother, Mary Help of Christians, especially among children and young people around the world.

Dedication

To all the sisters who during these 50 years have formed part of the Salesian Community in Gozo and in Malta.

In memory of Miss Olimpia Bondí and her parents Arturo and Dolane' Sammut whose devotion for St John Bosco and Mary Help of Christians inspired the wholehearted generosity through which so much has been achieved.

To all Past Pupils, Co-operators and other persons who have continued to support and sustain the sisters' endeavours in the accomplishment of their vocation on the Maltese islands.

In memory of our dear departed Sisters, past pupils and other co-operators and friends.

A Congregation of Saints

The Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was officially founded by Don Bosco in Mornese Italy, on the 5th August, 1872 with the religious profession of fifteen sisters, amongst whom their first superior, the 35 year old Mother Maria Domenica Mazzarello. Don Bosco was present at this first profession within this new Congregation, which he had founded in compliance to our Lady's express wish given him in a dream when he was just 9 years old.

On seeing his vision-dream materialise he wished the Congregation to be a living monument of his gratitude to our Lady Help of Christians and thus the title 'Daughters of Mary Help of Christians'. Today, more than 140 years later, the presence of the Salesian Sisters has extended to every corner of the world.

According to recent data published in the 2nd volume of the 2013 General Directory of the Institute of Mary Help of Christians, this presence can be quantified as a hub of generous, religious, educational and missionary activity given by over 13,000 sisters and 300 novices in 1414 houses scattered amongst 93 territories within the five continents. The same directory includes the names of 293 sisters who departed from life on earth and are hopefully reaping the fruit of their vocation, in heaven. However the fact that at the same time there are 300 novices could also be a sign that this congregation does not only have a past and present but still has an encouraging future.

In AFRICA there are 496 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 92 communities, in 24 countries working in:

Promotional or self-help centres
Vocational schools and literacy programmes
Village visitation
Health centres and dispensaries
Rural craft centres
Homes and shelters for young people at risk
Youth clubs and centres for young people

In **AMERICA** there are 4111 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 517 communities, in 23 countries working in:

After-school care and free-time activities
Evening schools to cater for those who are poorer
Youth clubs and centres for young people
Professional training and self-help groups
Mission centres among indigenous peoples & rural dwellers
Basic communities
Communities living in slum areas and on the margins of large cities
Shelters and homes for street children
Collaboration with social administrative structures that act as a voice in defence of young people and women
Private, parish and state schools of every kind and level
Promotional and cultural free-time activities
Religious development and retreat days for young people & adults
Rehabilitation centres for problem youth

In **ASIA** there are 2462 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 326 Communities, in 20 countries working in:

Schools of every kind and level
Small pastoral care centres in remote villages
Health education and nutrition
Centres for the advancement of women
Literacy courses
Shelters for young girls and women at risk
Rehabilitation centres for young former drug addicts
Mobile missions/Evangelisation
Spirituality centres

In **EUROPE** there are 6038 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 470 Communities, present in 22 countries, working in:

Schools of every kind and level
Universities
Student hostels
Youth ministry
After-school care and various free-time activities
Summer camps and programs

Parish ministry and catechesis
Shelters and homes for young people and women at risk
Promotional centres
Mobile missions/Evangelisation
Spirituality centres
Youth clubs and centers for young people
Formation houses
Vocational training centres

In **OCEANIA** there are 46 Sisters (FMA) belonging to 9 communities in 4 countries, working in:

Private, parish and state schools of every kind and level
Promotional and leisure-time cultural activities
Religious development and retreat days for young people & adults
Literacy and rehabilitation of 'problem' youth
Youth centres

(Ref: <http://www.cgfmanet.org/2.aspx?sez=2&lingua=2>)

Malta features in these numbers through the presence of two communities, one in Victoria Gozo and the other recently established in Sliema, Malta.

Significant Milestones of the Institute of Mary Help of Christians

1815-1871

- 1815** 16th August: John Bosco was born at Becchi (Castelnuovo d'Asti) Italy.
- 1817** 5th January: Dominic Pestarino, the confessor and spiritual director of Mary Domenica Mazzarello was born at Mornese (Alessandria) Italy.
- 1837** 9th May: Mary Domenica Mazzarello, the co-foundress of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, was born in the Mazzarelli hamlet at Mornese, Italy.
- 1864** 7th October: Don Bosco stopped at Mornese: first meeting with Mary Mazzarello.
- 1871** In May Don Bosco told his closest collaborators about his plan to found a women's religious congregation.
In June that same year the Holy Father, Pius IX, gave his approval.
During the summer Don Bosco entrusted Fr. Dominic Pestarino with the first draft of the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

1872-1881

- 1872** 5th August: Foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA); first admissions to the novitiate and first professions in the presence of the founder, Don Bosco, and the Bishop of Acqui, Mgr, Joseph Sciandra. Mary Domenica Mazzarello was the

- first superior with the title of substitute or 'vicar'.**
- 1873** The education authorities of Castelletto d'Orba officially recognised the first boarding school and the primary school of the FMA at Mornese.
- 1874** 8th October: the first FMA house was opened at Borgo San Martino (Alessandria) - Italy.
- 1875** 28th August: Mary Domenica Mazzarello and the first FMA made their perpetual vows into the hands of Don Bosco.
- 1876** 23rd January: diocesan approval of the Constitutions. 29th March: the first house in Turin-Valdocco was opened.
- 1877** 1st September: the first house of the Institute outside Italy was opened at Nice (France).
9th November: Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello and the first missionaries were received in audience by Pius IX.
14th November: the first six missionaries left for Uruguay.
- 1878** 8th December: first printed edition of the Constitutions.
- 1879** 4th February: the Mother house was transferred from Mornese to Nizza Monferrato (Italy).
- 1880** The Salesians and FMA began missionary work in Patagonia (Argentina).
- 1881** Feb-Mar: Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello fell seriously ill at St. Cyr (France).
14th May: Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello died at Nizza Monferrato aged 44. She left 26 houses and 166 Sisters.
On 18th August Sr. Catherine Daghero was elected superior general.

1882-1899

- 1884** 11th - 22nd August: the 1st General Chapter was held.
- 1885** Second edition of the Constitutions revised by Don Bosco.

- 1886 14th - 23rd August: the 2nd General Chapter was held.
- 1888 31st January: **the Founder Don Bosco died in Turin.**
3rd December: the FMA established the first house in the southernmost tip of South America (Chile).
- 1890 Don Bosco's cause of canonization was introduced.
- 1891 8th October: the first foundation in the Middle East - Betlehem.
- 1892 16th - 19th August: the 3rd General Chapter was held.
- 1893 8th December: first foundation in Africa: Mers-el-Kebir (Algeria).
- 1897 The FMA returned to Mornese.
- 1899 4th - 7th September: the 4th General Chapter was held.

1901-1950

- 1904 **On 22nd January Laura Vicuña died at Junín de los Andes (Argentina). Her cause of canonization was opened in 1955.**
- 1905 8th - 20th September: the 5th General Chapter took place. The Constitutions were revised to bring them into harmony with the Normae secundum quas.
- 1907 **Don Bosco was declared Venerable.**
8th - 25th September: the 6th General (Special) Chapter was held.
- 1908 7th February: canonical erection of the first 10 religious provinces.
19th March: thanks to Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the Past Pupils Association was formed at Turin.
26th March: death of Sr. Maddalena Morano at Catania (Italy). Her cause of canonization was opened in 1935.
- 1911 23rd June: Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello's cause of canonization was introduced.

- 7th September: pontifical approval of the Institute with the Decretum Laudis.**
- 1913** 15th-23rd September: the 7th General Chapter was held.
- 1922** Approval of the Constitutions brought in line with the norms of the Code of Canon Law.
8th - 18th September: the 8th General Chapter took place.
- 1924** 16th July: Sr. Luisa Vaschetti was elected superior general.
- 1928** 31st August to 12th September: the 9th General Chapter took place.
- 1929** 2nd June: Don Bosco was declared Blessed.
6th December: the generalate of the Institute moved from Nizza Monferrato to Turin.
- 1934** 1st April: **Don Bosco was proclaimed a saint.**
2nd-7th July: the 10th General Chapter was held.
- 1935** 10th February: death of Sr. Eusebia Palomino Yenes at Valverde del Camino (Spain). Her cause of canonization was opened in 1982.
- 1936** 3rd May: Pius XI declared **Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello 'Venerable'.**
6th September: Sr. Amparo Carbonell Muñoz and Sr. Carmen Moreno Benítez were executed during the Spanish persecution.
- 1938** 9th February: the mortal remains of Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello were transferred from Nizza Monferrato to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.
20th November: Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello was proclaimed 'Blessed'.
- 1943** 21st September: Sr. Ermelinda Lucotti was appointed superior general.
- 1947** 16th - 24th July: the 11th General Chapter was held.

1951-1999

- 1951** **24th June:** Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello, co-foundress of the Institute, was proclaimed a Saint.
15th August: the former boarding school was re-opened at Mornese.
30th August: death of Sr. Laura Meozzi in Poland. Her cause of canonization was introduced in 1986.
- 1953** **16th - 24th July:** the 12th General Chapter was held.
- 1954** **19th November:** first foundation in Australia.
- 1958** **14th-24th September:** the 13th General Chapter took place. Sr. Angela Vespa was elected superior general.
- 1964** **14th August-17th September:** the 14th General Chapter took place.
- 1969** **16th January to 29th May** the 15th General (Special) Chapter took place at Rome. Its purpose was the re-working of the Constitutions according to the directives of Vatican II. Sr. Ersilia Canta was elected superior general.
25th August: death of Sr. Maria Troncatti at Sucúa (Ecuador). Her cause of canonization was introduced in 1986.
11th October: the generalate of the Institute moved from Turin to Rome.
- 1970** **27th June:** the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences was canonically erected in Turin.
- 1975** **11th April - 28th July:** the 16th General Chapter took place.
- 1977** **7th July:** death of Sr. Maria Romero Meneses at León (Nicaragua). Her cause of canonization was introduced in 1988.
- 1981** **15th September - 27th February 1982:** the 17th General Chapter took place. It gave a final revision to the draft Constitutions. Sr. Rosetta Marchese was elected superior general.
- 1982** **24th June:** the Constitutions, renewed according to the

directives of Vatican II, were approved by decree of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRIS).

12th July: Sr. Teresa Valsé Pantellini was declared 'Venerable'.

1984 24th August - 29th September: the 18th General Chapter was held. Sr. Marinella Castagno was elected superior general.

1986 5th June: **Laura Vicuña was declared 'Venerable'.**

1988 1st September: **Sr. Maddalena Morano was declared 'Venerable'.**

3rd September: **Laura Vicuña was proclaimed 'Blessed' at Colle Don Bosco, Turin.**

1990 19th September - 17th November: the 19th General Chapter took place.

1994 5th November: **Sr. Maddalena Morano was proclaimed 'Blessed' at Catania (Italy)**

1996 18th September - 15th November: the 20th General Chapter took place. Sr. Antonia Colombo was elected superior general.

17th December: **Sr. Eusebia Palomino was declared 'Venerable'.**

2000

2000 18th December: **Sr. Maria Romero was declared 'Venerable'.**

2001 11th March: **Sr. Amparo Carbonell Muñoz and Sr. Carmen Moreno Benítez were proclaimed 'Blessed' with 32 Spanish Salesian martyrs.**

2002 14th April: in Rome **Sr. Maria Romero Meneses was proclaimed 'Blessed'.**

18th September to 16th November: the 21st General Chapter was held.

- 2004 25th April: in Rome **Sr. Eusebia Palomino** was proclaimed 'Blessed'
- 2006 23rd October 23: **Margherita Occhiena** declared Venerable.
- 2008 September 18 - November 15: the 22nd General Chapter was held. On October 24 **Sr. Yvonne Reungoat** is elected Superior General
- 2010 Centenary of the death of Blessed Michele Rua, First Successor of Don Bosco.
- 2011 7th September: Centenary of Pontifical Approval of the Institute.
- 2012 5th August: 140th Anniversary of the foundation of the FMA Institute.

(Ref: <http://www.cgfmanet.org/1.aspx?lingua=1&sez=1&sotsez=6&detsotsez=1>)

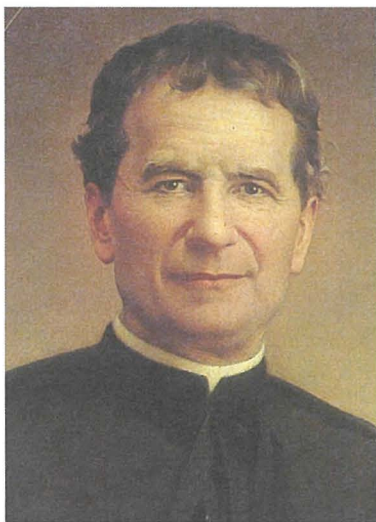
Holiness

The educational system of Don Bosco which the Salesian Sisters have continuously applied since their foundation, has, in the course of 150 years, produced almost surprising results. Heroes, heroines and saints who have remained almost unknown, giving extraordinary examples of faith within their ordinary lives.

Sanctity is a gratuitous participation in God's holiness and is, therefore, a gift of grace and not only fruit of our own striving which we aim to achieve through our personal efforts. Holiness is the immersion of the whole person (mind, heart, hands and feet) into the mysterious sphere of the goodness, gratuity and mercy of God's love.

Note: The Institute's website gives more detailed information and various writings and other testimonies on the lives and experiences of the many salesian saints through the following link:

<http://www.cgfmanet.org/Bd/documenti.aspx?lingua=1&cat=027&sotCat=025>



St John Bosco (1815–1888)

On the 16th August 2015 the Salesian Congregation around the world will be celebrating the 2nd centenary from Don Bosco's birth. The Congregation is preparing itself for the commemoration of this significant event through a programme spread over 3 years. The second year, which commenced on the 16th August 2013, focuses on the visionary dream Don Bosco had when he was 9 years old.

The dream in which he saw his congregation growing, under the guidance of our Lord and Mary Help of Christians.

The same congregation, which he described as a congregation of saints starting from Saint Domenico Savio, his treasured pupil and ending in scores of salesian nuns and missionaries who have been proclaimed saints throughout the past decades. Don Bosco himself was proclaimed saint in 1934 and Madre Mazzarello in 1951. A number of other Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were beatified or declared as saints by Popes in recent years.

The Salesian Rector Major Don Pascual Chávez Villanueva has invited the salesian congregation to study and live more closely to don Bosco's spirituality. It is not enough to learn more about the saint's life, his actions, his educational methods. Don Bosco's great work flourished through his profound spiritual experience. 'It is not easy to precisely identify Don Bosco's spiritual experience. This is perhaps the less discovered characteristic of Don Bosco. He is a man totally dedicated to his work, he hasn't left us explicit reflections on his interior evolution of his spiritual life; he hasn't written spiritual diaries; he doesn't give interpretations; he prefers to transmit the spirit, describing his life experience or through the biographies of his youngsters.'

Don Bosco died in Turin, Italy on the 31st January, 1888.

St Maria Domenica Mazzarello (1837 – 1881)



St Mary Domenica Mazzarello was born on the 9th May 1837. She providentially met Don Bosco for the first time on the 8th October, 1864 together with a group of 'Children of Mary'. Upon seeing him, clasping her hands together, she exclaimed, 'Don Bosco is a saint.

I feel that he is a saint'. When she was 35 years old she made her profession and together with Don Bosco founded the Institute of Mary Help of Christians on the 5th August 1872, in Mornese, Italy. Mother Mazzarello died in Nizza Monferrato, Italy on the 14th May, 1881 when she was 44 years old.

She was canonised on the 24th June, 1951 by Pope Pius XII, who gave her the title of 'Co-foundress' of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians with St. John Bosco.

Gozo within this venerable reality

The Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco are this year celebrating the 50th anniversary of their presence on the island of Gozo. This presence signified that this little known and small mediterranean island, with an area of 67km², started to form part of an ever growing congregation founded just over 90 years earlier by Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. Today this presence has also extended to the mainland with the setting up of another community in Sliema.

The establishment of this house in Malta marks the most recent link in a chain of events that developed through the generosity of an admirable benefactress, Miss Olimpia Bondí. Ms Bondí steadfastly endeavoured to follow in her parents' exemplary lives. Her mother Dola had once advised her: 'If ever you wish to do a good work, do it in honour of Mary Help of Christians and St John Bosco'. Dola Bondí

neé Sammut was a Salesian co-operator and her husband Arturo Bondí was a renowned architect. After her parents' demise Ms Bondí, quietly reaching out to the needy, persisted in her contacts with the Salesian and Church authorities in Malta and abroad, in order to see the Salesian Sisters established in Gozo.



The property donated by Miss Olimpia Bondí which has housed the Salesian Sisters Community in Gozo since 1963

Through the generous donation of all her property and other material assets for this just cause, and after striving for more than five years, Miss Bondí opened her house in Republic Street Victoria, (then Racecourse Street), to the first sisters who would form the first Salesian Sisters Community on our islands. Thus on the 28th August 1963, she welcomed the first three sisters who arrived from Italy – Sr. Maria Bonello, Sr. Maria Cilia and Sr. Giulia Mollica.

On the same day, Sr. Rose Oliveri, who would later take up her responsibilities as the first Sister Superior in Gozo, arrived in Rome from the United States. Her stay in Rome prepared her for her new role which she took up on October 30 of the same year. Sr Rose still forms part of the Salesian Sisters Community in Gozo, and she was only away from the island for a short time since her arrival in 1963.

With the unstinting backing of Ms Bondí, the sisters opened a kindergarten and a sewing class in two rented rooms in Ghasri. The first oratory for girls was opened at the house in Republic Street in January 1964. In a very short time the house was filled with a large

group of happy, lively, and noisy girls. Some of them are still close to the community through their regular attendance and participation in the activities of the Past Pupils group. In the meantime in agreement with the superiors, works on the building of a house in Għasri continued. The first stone was laid on the 1st November 1963 and the house dedicated to 'Laura Vicuña' was inaugurated on the 20th November 1966. After serving for several years as an aspirantate, the building was later converted into a primary school. For over 40 years, Laura Vicuña School has provided a sound education in harmony with the Salesian spirit, to thousands of children.



*Laura Vicuña School in Għasri
(formerly the Aspirantate Laura Vicuña)*

Today the Salesian Community in Gozo, is supported by the collaboration of a number of lay teachers in the running of their kindergarten classes and primary school, the Parent Teachers Association of Laura Vicuna School, and by other members in the Past Pupils Group and the Salesian Co-operators group. Catechism classes are held for young children in preparation of their First Holy Communion and their Confirmation, while teenage girls are encouraged to keep contact through activities at the Girls' Club.

The Salesian Sisters' community in Gozo is a living testimony of the Lord's Providence starting from the immeasurable generosity of their benefactress which was surely blessed with the grace of our Lord and the continuous assistance of Mary Help of Christians.

Historical Note

In his short publication entitled '*Ulied Maria Għajnuna tal-Insara (Is-Sorijiet Sależjani ta' San Gwann Bosco) f'Malta u Għawdex*' (The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (The Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco) in Malta and Gozo), Fr Frans Żammit recounts:

It was in July 1958, when Miss Olimpia Bondi, daughter of Arturo Bondi and Dola nee' Sammut, met Fr. Joseph Mangion SDB, director of the Salesian Oratory in Sliema. Following her mother's death, Miss Bondi became the great Benefactress of the Salesian Sisters and was now ready to give herself and all her material possessions in order to see them established in Gozo. One of the first persons to be contacted was Fr Nazzareno Camilleri, a professor at the Salesian University in Rome, who was very spiritual and well respected by his Superiors, also having continuous contact with the Salesian Sisters. In a letter written on the 8th April, 1959, Fr. Mangion asked Fr Nazzareno to help him in speeding up this matter.



Fr Joseph Mangion with Sr Maria Cilia, Sr Giulia Mollica, Sr Rose Oliveri & Sr Regina Garibé

The same publication goes on to describe how this was followed by a number of meetings and continuous correspondence with the various superiors and entities concerned. One such meeting was held with the then Bishop of Gozo H.L. Mgr Joseph Pace in 1958, who four years later gave the necessary authorisation for the Salesian Sisters to come

to Gozo. Amongst the various meetings and endeavours Fr. Żammit mentions an important meeting held on the 19th August 1959, with Mother General Angela Vespa at the Mother House in Italy. Mother General agreed with Miss Bondi's proposal of establishing a Salesian Sisters Community in Gozo.

Following months of waiting and persistent contacts, the Provincial of Sicily Mother Ersilia Scanziani made a site visit to Gozo towards the end of Summer 1962. She was instructed by Mother General to determine the necessary proceedings for the establishment of a Salesian Sisters Community in Gozo that would also encompass the setting up of an oratory and other related activities.

In his writings, Fr Żammit continues:

'Madre Scanziani reported back in detail to Mother General on the 8th October, 1962'.



H.L. Bishop Joseph Pace signing his authorisation with Sr Giulia Mollica, Sr Rose Oliveri, Miss Bondi, Sr Esther Murphy & Sr Maria Cilia in the background

Sr. Rose Oliveri fma, recalls – *'Three sisters arrived in Gozo from Sicily in the latter part of 1963; by October the fourth sister arrived from the States (herself). This was made possible through the initiative and great generosity of Miss Olimpia Bondi. The sisters were kindly lodged at her residence at 20, Racecourse Street (now Republic Street) in Victoria Gozo. Things happened in rapid succession. The 1st October 1963 marked the opening of the Oratory, kindergarten and sewing class in two rented rooms in Ghasri. A month later, on the 1st November, 1963, H.L. the late Bishop Pace officiated the ceremony of the laying of the first cornerstone of the convent in Ghasri.*

In the meantime we initiated our activity for the girls in Victoria with the opening of the Oratory on the 19th January, 1964. The inauguration of the new building in Ghasri took place on the 20th November, 1966.



Sr Carmen Vella and Sr Stella Spiteri receiving the medal as Postulants from the then Apostolic Administrator for Gozo Mgr. Nicholas J Cauchi with. Fr Albert Curmi, the first Chaplain of the Salesian Community

Much to our joy, the 14th February 1967 witnessed the entering of the first two vocations, both girls from the village of Kercem. It was with mixed feelings of elation and apprehension that we saw our first two Postulants leave for Turin, Italy in June 1968, for their religious, cultural and academic formation. Would two young, inexperienced, village girls stand the test of separation from their island and all it held dear for them? Would they be able to confront life in a large country? Time has proved to us that they could! When they left for Turin, seven of their companions hailing from Gozo and Malta remained in the Aspirantate.

Another blessing awaited us in October 1970, an unexpected gift of Divine Providence, a means of doing much good to souls – the opening of Laura Vicuna Primary School for boys and girls.

Whereas in 1972 another cherished dream started to materialise through the initiative and sage planning of our benefactress Miss Olimpia Bondi. The building of a house by the sea, which today is a haven of peace, joy and relaxation for the Sisters as well as past and present pupils, where it also serves for various activities for our club girls.

Sr Rose recalls a particular anecdote from her first day on our islands, 50 years ago. Fr. Mangion had gone to welcome her at the airport. On their way to Gozo he asked her *'What is your first impression of the island?'* She had just left the State of New Jersey in the States, considered to be the garden state! The Maltese islands had gone through one of the warmest summers and a very dry winter so the land was particularly parched and its colour amalgamated with the yellow stone of the islands' buildings. With her ever present sincerity she replied: *'Oh! Everything just looks the same colour!'*. Fr Mangion promptly answered *'Then you must put the colour in!'*.

Fifty years later, many of us who have grown under the spiritual and motherly guidance of this dear Sister, can actually attest that she definitely enhanced our lives with her colourful teachings and her persistent dedication through her vocation. Indeed she has been a symbol of hope and inspiration throughout these 50 years in her roles as Mother Superior and a Sister within her community, and an Educator and School Headmistress, especially during the establishment and the first decades of running of Laura Vicuña School. For many of us she was and still is a mentor to whom we always refer in our hour of need.

The FMA (Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice) vocational walk

On accepting their vocational calling aspirants go through a year of Aspirantate. The sisters mentioned below followed their year of Aspirantate in Ghasri Gozo, following which they went for 6 months Postulancy and another 2 years of Novitiate in Italy. Simple vows are taken for three consecutive years. Perpetual Vows are taken at the end of the 6th year.

Sr Stella Spiteri	Feb 1967
Sr Carmen Vella	Feb 1967
Sr Rita Said	Sept 1967
Sr Georgina Grech	Sept 1967
Sr Maria Debono	Sept 1967
Sr Nazzarena Calleja	Jan 1968
Sr Antoinette Pace	Jan 1968
Sr Doris Spiteri	Jun 1969
Sr Ines Bonello	Oct 1970

FMA Gozo – Important Milestones

- 1958 July - Miss Bondí meets Fr. Joseph Mangion sdb.
Later that month they met H.L. Mgr J Pace Bishop of Gozo.
- 1959 April – Fr Mangion asks Fr Nazzareno Camilleri sdb to strengthen the efforts needed to effectively promote Miss Bondí's proposal.
19th August – Miss Bondí meets Mother General Angela Vespa at the Mother House in Italy.
- 1962 June - Bishop Pace gives his authorisation and informs Mother General accordingly.
October – Mother Provincial Sr Ersilia Scanziani makes a site visit to Gozo and sends a detailed report to Mother General.
- 1963 28th August – Arrival in Gozo of Sr Maria Bonello, Sr Maria Cilia and Sr Giulia Mollica from Sicily. Sr Rose Oliveri arrives in Rome for a short stay before assuming her post as the first Sister Superior in Gozo.
1st October – The initiation of the Salesian Community's apostolate in Gozo - Opening of an Oratory, kindergarten, and sewing class in two rented rooms in Għasri.
1st November – Laying of first cornerstone of the convent in Għasri officiated by H. L. Bishop Pace.
- 1964 19th January – Opening of the Oratory for Girls at 20, Racecourse Street (now Republic Street) Victoria.
- 1966 20th November – Inauguration of the Aspirantate in Għasri under the title Laura Vicuna Convent.
- 1967 14th February – The first two vocations – Sr Stella Spiteri and Sr Carmen Vella, both from Kerċem, start their year of aspirantate in Għasri.
- 1970 October – Opening of Laura Vicuna Primary School for boys and girls in Għasri.
- 1971 4th July – H. L. The late Bishop Nicholas J Cauchi blesses the statue of Mary Help of Christians in Għasri as part of the activities to mark the first centenary year.
- 1972 The initiation of the building of a house by the sea – another initiative funded through the generosity of Miss Olimpia Bondí.
- 1977 October – For lack of sufficient space the kindergarden is transferred from the school in Għasri to the present premises in Republic Str, Victoria.

2013 5th October – The Salesian Community marks the 50th anniversary of its establishment in Gozo. The community together with many friends, present and past pupils, co-operators and other collaborators welcomed Mother Yvonne Reungoat, Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Mother Provincial Sr Marinella Scano who came to Gozo for this occasion. Thanksgiving mass was celebrated by H.E. Bishop Charles J. Scicluna at Our Lady of Ta' Pinu Sanctuary in Gozo.

The present FMA community in Gozo



*Sr Stella Spiteri, Sr Ines Bonello, Sr Rose Oliveri, Sr Elsa Gretter (Sister Superior),
Sr Nazzarena Calleja, Sr Antoinette Pace*

The FMA community in Sliema



Sr Theresa Curmi (Sister Superior), Sr Georgina Grech, Sr Kyoung-Jin (who comes from Korea and is also known as Sr Scholastica) together with young people at the Oratory

The anniversary of the 50th anniversary from the establishment of the Salesian Sisters Community in Gozo falls within the preparations for the bi-centenary celebrations marking Don Bosco's birth and just after the 140 years of the birth of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

It is to be augured that these occasions provide salesian past pupils and other persons close to the salesian communities in Gozo and Malta, to reflect more on the Salesian spirit preached and practiced by Don Bosco under the continued guidance and protection of Mary Help of Christians.

Other information

List of all sisters who at some time or other rendered services within the Salesian Sisters Community in Gozo

Sr Saveria	Azzolino
Sr Agnes	Azzopardi
Sr Imelda	Barattino
Sr Teresa	Bergadano
Sr Ines	Bonello
Sr Maria	Bonello
Sr Mary	Cairns
Sr Nazzarena	Calleja
Sr Maria	Cilia
Sr Maria	Debono
Sr Stephanie	Dunn
Sr Clara	Franceschini
Sr Theresa	Frost
Sr Regina	Garibé
Sr Gabriella	Gattazzo
Sr Georgina	Grech
Sr Elsa	Gretter
Sr Bridget	Hughes
Sr Mary	Hughes
Sr Ines T	Jecorsini
Sr Marjorie	Lavery
Sr Eileen	Magri
Sr Georgia	Micallef
Sr Giulia	Mollica
Sr Esther	Murphy
Sr Rose	Oliveri
Sr Antoinette	Pace
Sr Carmelina	Quaglia
Sr Rita	Said
Sr Rosemary	Salnitro
Sr Doris	Spiteri
Sr Stella	Spiteri
Sr Pia	Testaferrata
Sr Carmen	Vella

In his book mentioned earlier, Fr Frans Zammit also gives detailed information about 14 young girls who became Salesian Sisters prior to the establishment of the Salesian Community in Gozo. Eleven of these joined the FMA between 1940 and 1960, and included:

Sr Pia	Testaferrata	- born in 1911, in Valletta, Malta
Sr Georgia	Micallef	- born in 1925 in Victoria, Gozo
Sr Maria	Bonello	- born in 1929 in Qormi, Malta
Sr Maria	Vella	- born in 1931, in Algiers
Sr Agnes	Azzopardi	- born in 1931 in Sliema, Malta
Sr Guzeppina	Muscat	- born in 1932 in Nadur, Gozo
Sr Theresa	Curmi	- born in 1935, in Sliema, Malta
Sr Maria	Cilia	- born in 1943, in Hamrun, Malta
Sr Rosa Maria	Salnitro	- born in 1934, in Sliema, Malta
Sr Marcella	Vella	- born in 1941 in Algiers
Sr Eileen	Magri	- born in 1936 in Sliema Malta

The first Maltese Salesian Sister was Sr Veneranda Zammit born in Tunis, North Africa from a Maltese father and a French mother in 1882. In 1908 (1 year after her perpetual vows) Sr Zammit together with another 3 nuns went to Paterson, New York, USA, where they opened the first house amidst the poverty and hunger that prevailed in the area.

Rosina Felica, born in Cospicua in 1879 was the second Maltese to join the Salesian Sisters in 1905, followed by Sr Maria Tewma who was born in Gudja, Malta in 1895 and professed in 1921. She died in 1977 in St. Cyr, France the same place that had welcomed the Salesian Sisters' foundress, Mother Maria Domenica Mazzarello, on her first visit outside the Italian territory.



Mother Yvonne Reungoat

Mother General of the
Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
(Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco)

Mother Yvonne Reungoat has been a member of the General Council since 1996 and since 2002 she has given her service as Vicar General and also as the person directly responsible for the four large international communities in Rome. During this time she was the closest collaborator to Mother General, Mother Antonia Colombo and she shared with her the government of the Institute and the processes inherent to religious life and to education, undertaken by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians on a worldwide level.

General Chapter XXII (2008) elected her as the new Superior General, the 9th successor to Maria Domenica Mazzarello.

Mother Yvonne was born at Plouenan (Finistère, France) on January 14, 1945. She graduated in History and Geography from the State University in Lyon, and taught in the professional school of that city for 11 years. She later served as community animator and province vicar. From 1983 to 1989 she was provincial of the French province of Sacred Heart with headquarters in Paris.

Her broader knowledge of the Institute began in 1990, the year in which she was offered the mandate of delegate of the provinces of Spain and France for West Africa. It was an appointment that allowed her to participate in the nineteenth General Chapter held that year.

Her service of animation had begun during the preceding years as animator and the person responsible for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of her nation. In 1991 she was elected Superior of the African province of Mother of God, with headquarters at Lomé (Togo).

These were the years during which Mother Yvonne gave preference to relationships with the Sisters, encouraged the communities formed by members of different nationalities to live the Salesian charisma

‘together in unity, through diversity’. She gave special attention to the young people in formation, knowing how to take on the poverty and suffering of the least, and the collaboration with the Salesian Family for the formation of animators. Her ability in grasping the African cultural reality was notable, even to the point of assuming its rhythm that appreciated the acceptance of persons and the total giving of all to the other person, to her story, to the time that is necessary to be one’s self and to express oneself.

General Chapter XX (1996) elected her as Visiting Councillor. This was the period during which she met and came to know the Sisters of six Latin American provinces, four European and that of Korea (Asia). During the General Chapter of 2002 she was elected Vicar General of the Institute. In addition to following the communities directly dependent to the Superior General, she coordinated the planning and organisation of five meetings for new provincials, accompanied the collaboration of the Institute with the Cultural Association for Salesian History and in 2004 she visited the communities of the Madrid province of St. Teresa and in 2005 the province of Our Lady of Africa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The XXII General Chapter (the fifth Chapter in which she participated), elected her as the Mother General. After 136 years of Mother Generals hailing from Italy, the newly elected Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, is French. It is a historical turn, one that links us to the origins of the Congregation. The Foundress, Mother Maria Domenica Mazzarello, in fact, had made her first visit beyond the confines of Italy to St. Cyr in France.

(Ref: <http://www.cgfmanet.org/1.aspx?sez=1&sotSez=1&detSotSez=2&doc=9&Lingua=1>)

List of all Mothers General

Mother Maria Domenica Mazzarello		1872 - 1881
Mother Caterina Daghero		1881 - 1924
Mother Louisa Vaschetti		1924 - 1943
Mother Linda Lucotti		1943 - 1957
Mother Angela Vespa		1957 - 1969
Mother Ersilia Canta		1969 - 1981
Mother Rosetta Marchese		1981 - 1984
Mother Marinella Castagno		1984 - 1996
Mother Antonia Colombo		1996 - 2008
Mother Yvonne Reungoat		2008 -

Miss Olimpia Bondi – A great benefactress



Miss Olimpia Bondi

Miss Olimpia Bondi was the only daughter of Architect Arturo Bondi and Dola neè Sammut.

She was born in Victoria Gozo on the 3rd September, 1922. After striving and succeeding in establishing the 'Sisters of Don Bosco' in Gozo she went to meet the risen Lord on the 6th April, 2011 after a short illness borne in Christian fortitude. Her last call was to 'Maria Auxilium Christianorum'.

Her memory and example remain vivid and strong in the memories of all those who had the privilege of knowing her.

Many benefitted greatly from her voiceless, selfless generosity.

Various moments at Laura Vicuna School



Salesian Creed

We believe that God
LOVES the young

We believe that Jesus wants
to **SHARE** His **LIFE** with young people

The **HOLY** Spirit
is present
in and through
them to **build**
an authentic
CHRISTIAN
community

We believe that
AWAITS God
us in the
YOUNG to
offer us the grace
of serving HIM

We believe that no young person can be
excluded from our hope and activity

We believe that
in every young person God
has placed the **GEM** of His **NEW** life